



THE NAVAJO NATION

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President Russell Begaye honors Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum



Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez signed a proclamation for flags across the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff in honor of Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum. The proclamation, along with the Navajo Nation flag and a framed document explaining the 13 folds of the American flag was presented to the Ketchum family by President Begaye on June 13 at Naatsis'áán, Ariz. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN, Ariz.—A national hero was laid to rest on June 13.

Hundreds of people gathered inside a striped tent at the Pioneer Days Event Field for the funeral service of Navajo Code Talker Bahe Ketchum, who passed on June 8 in Flagstaff.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye was in attendance to pay respect to Ketchum on behalf of the Navajo people. Rep. Jennifer

“We extend our heartfelt condolences to his children, friends, relatives and the community of Navajo Mountain.”

Benally (D-Ariz.) also attended the funeral service.

Four Navajo Code Talkers were also on hand to honor their brother and comrade in arms. Members of the Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders and a

detachment of U.S. Marines from Phoenix joined the Code Talkers to remember Ketchum.

“Today, our nation is mourning over the loss of Bahe Ketchum, one of our national heroes. We extend

our heartfelt condolences to his children, friends, relatives and the community of Navajo Mountain,” said President Begaye.

He said Ketchum was not only a hero and Marine, but also a kind person who served his community and advocated for the next generation, the children.

“Our nation extends gratitude for his service and his work will continue for the years to come and may he rest

in peace,” President Begaye said.

President Begaye presented the Ketchum family with the Navajo Nation flag, a framed and signed proclamation for flags across the Nation to be flown at half-staff in honor of Bahe Ketchum, and a framed document explaining the 13 folds of the American flag.

Former chairman and Navajo Code Talker Peter MacDonald Sr. provided the eulogy, recounting the humble background and childhood of Ketchum, before he began his service to the country as a Code Talker.

Ketchum was of the Many Goats Clan, born for the Edge Water Clan. His maternal grandfathers were Bitter Water Clan and his paternal grandfathers were Black Streak Wood Clan.

After Ketchum’s biological mother passed when he was a toddler, *Asdzaa Bi Tlizi Ligaii*, Lady with White Goats, raised him.

In his late teens, Ketchum was married *Hastii Bi Gishii’s* daughter from the Kaibeto area, but she died giving birth to their daughter when Ketchum was serving in World War II.

After returning from the war, he married Estella Nez Tsosie, who preceded him in death in 2006. Eight children, 29 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren survive Ketchum.

“We’re here to honor a Marine, a man of good character, a man who loved deeply and was loved in return,” MacDonald said. “He was a Navajo Code Talker, a hero and friend of our family.”

Ketchum landed April 1, 1945 on the beaches of Okinawa with the 6th Marine Division. After surviving the Battle of Okinawa, he served in main land China assisting with the surrender of the Japanese at Tsing Tao.

“What he experienced growing up out here in the remote area helped him, I’m sure, to survive the years he was in the military,” said MacDonald.

Ketchum’s children celebrated their father’s gentle spirit that was never harsh in speech or actions. They said he was a man of faith who never hesitated to share his love of God with others.

“Dad was an honest, reliable and faithful provider to his wife and children. He encouraged his children to attain higher education and was an active community member and leader of Navajo Mountain,” his children said. “We are hopeful our family will follow in the footsteps of his kindness, faith and leadership.

“We’ll miss you Dad, but we know you are in a good place with God and other family members who left before you,” they added.

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NAVAJO PHONETIC ALPHABET

A	Wóláchíí'	Ant
B	Shash	Bear
C	Mósi	Cat
D	Bijih	Deer
E	Dzeeh	Elk
F	Ma'ii	Fox
G	Tl'izi	Goat
H	Łijí'	Horse
I	Tin	Ice
J	Télichó'i	Jackass
K	Tl'izi yázhí	Kid
L	Dibé yázhí	Lamb
M	Na'ats'oosi	Mouse
N	Neeshch'íi'	Nut
O	Né'eshjaa'	Owl
P	Bisóodi	Pig
Q	K'aa' yeiltijh	Quiver
R	Gah	Rabbit
S	Dibé	Sheep
T	Tązhii	Turkey
U	Nóóda'i	Ute
V	Ak'ehdidliní	Victor
W	Di'ooii	Weasel
X	Alná'ázdzhoh	Cross
Y	Tsá'áshi'	Yucca
Z	Béesh dootł'izh	Zinc



Many people asked to be photographed with President Begaye after the funeral service concluded. He met with young and old, veterans and civilians alike for photos. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Private First Class Bahe Ketchum was honored not only by his community and tribal leaders, but his comrades, the Navajo Code Talkers, as well. Four members were present for the ceremony. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Hundreds of people packed inside the yellow and white striped tent that was erected at the Navajo Mountain Pioneer Days Event Grounds. Although it was hot, the community and public paid their respect to a hero. (Photo by Rick Abasta)